



Photo by J. Cornell

Just Scoop It

You know that cleaning up after your pet is the right thing to do (and it's required by law).

Most of you are the considerate, law-abiding pet owners who already walk by the rules. While

Removing your dog's droppings is required by Fairfax County ordinance. The fine can be up to \$250 – an added incentive to pick up after your pooch.

you can't discount the improved aesthetics of a park with proper disposal; compelling reasons to dispose of pet waste include resource protection and public health.

Animal feces, like other pollutants, wash into our creeks and streams, posing a water contamination risk. Wading or swimming, even by your pet, in contaminated water is a health danger. Water quality also suffers from an excess of animal waste. Added nutrients will encourage weed and algae growth, turning otherwise clean and clear water cloudy and green. Reduced water quality may also threaten the ability of fish and invertebrates to thrive.

Diseases and parasites may be transmitted from pet waste to humans or pets that have open wounds or depressed immune systems. Bacterial diseases like campylobacteriosis and salmonellosis can cause diarrhea and flu-like symptoms. Cryptosporidium, a protozoan



Rocky Mountain Laboratories, NIH, NIAID

Salmonella (in red), is just one of the many illness-causing organisms that can be transmitted to humans and pets from pet waste.

parasite carried by many animals, can cause diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea and dehydration. Toxocariasis or roundworms are usually transmitted from dogs to humans, often without noticeable symptoms, but may cause vision loss, a rash, fever or cough.

It only takes a few extra seconds to scoop the poop when you are on trails, playgrounds and athletic fields or anywhere in your watershed. It is time well spent to protect natural resources and human and canine health.

Leashes Are Not Optional

We share our parks with many other people, wildlife and plants. Unfortunately, unleashed animals may harm or kill wildlife and vice versa. Songbirds, small mammals and snakes can be flushed by a curious dog or killed by a hunting house cat. Leashing your pet, in or out of a park, means that there will be a smaller risk of encountering a dangerous situation. By keeping your pet on leash, you will also help prevent Fido or Fluffy from getting lost, running into traffic, contracting ticks or poison ivy and annoying or scaring other park visitors. And, a leash is the best way to develop an affectionate pet, as the touch of it gives definite assurance of being protected, loved and wanted.



Fairfax County Park Authority regulations require all pets to be on a leash. Failing to do so can result in a fine of up to \$250.

If not you, who? Big things

Lead your dog. Volunteer to help out at one of the many off-leash dog areas. Duties include monitoring for wear and tear and helping maintain the facility. Call park operations for more information, 703-324-8594.

"Our happiest childhood memories almost all included those dogs. Hiking with them, swimming with them, playing with them, getting in trouble with them."

John Grogan, *Marley & Me*

If not you, who? Small things

Put pet waste in the proper place. (1) Put pet waste in the trash. Biodegradable bags are an alternative to plastic that use less resources. (2) Flush it (but not the bag!) down the toilet. Water from your toilet is treated to remove most pollutants before it reaches a waterway. Putting the waste in a storm drain by-passes the sanitary sewer system and will pollute your local stream. (3) Bury it in your yard in a hole or trench that is at least five inches deep. Microorganisms in the top layer of soil will break down the waste and release nutrients to fertilize nearby plants. (But do not bury pet waste in a park; it is against regulations to dig in the parks).

If not you, who? Small things

Spread the word about proper pet waste disposal. Contact us at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/stewardship to obtain more copies of this brochure to pass out the next time you are with a pack of pups.



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Keep those extra long leashes on your dogs as they cool off by swimming in Lake Fairfax and Lake Accotink. (But swimming in most other park lakes and streams is strongly discouraged or off limits due to fishing and water quality concerns, so be sure to check the signs.)

Mornings with Fido



A walk on the trails through Fairfax County's parks can be an adventure for you and your pet. Dogs (and for that matter, your leashed cats too) are welcome to join you as you explore park land – you might see the park through new eyes! Other visitors walking their dogs, wildlife searching for food, a family having a

picnic, a gurgling creek to splash through or even a stray blade of grass to sniff and chew can become the highlight of an afternoon when you are walking with your pet. Your dog will benefit from smelling new territory and socializing with other dogs. Plus the quality time spent with you will reassure your dog about his place in the home pack.

Off-Leash Areas

Off-leash dog areas are a great resource for exercising your dog in a safe environment.

Dog park areas are fenced, and some have amenities like on-site water or a separate

enclosure for smaller dogs. So get out there, stretch your legs and Fido's too. Off-leash dog areas are open dawn to dusk, unless posted otherwise. For locations of the nearest off-leash dog areas and dog park rules: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/offleash.htm.



These happy dogs and companions are enjoying an off-leash romp at a local dog park, one of the many recreational opportunities for pets and their people in Fairfax County parks.



Care, Educate, Inspire

Stewardship is about working together to care for the environmental and cultural resources of Fairfax County. People become stewards for different reasons. They may want to help ensure clean water and air. They may wish to share something with their children. They may be inspired by spiritual beliefs. Whatever prompts our commitment, it is easy to take an active role in stewardship. It can be a small and simple thing, or it can be much bigger. Either way, it all adds up to a Fairfax County that looks to its past with pride and to its future with confidence.

You can learn more about Fairfax County Stewardship, the Board of Supervisors' 20-year environmental vision and the Fairfax County Park Authority at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/stewardship or call 703-324-8674



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Fairfax County Stewardship



Pets in Parks